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Improving Transport Services Marketing to Enhance Regional Tourism Potential: A Case Study of Khorezm Region

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Abstract: In today's economic environment, fully realizing regional tourism potential is closely linked to the quality of transport services and the effectiveness of their marketing policy. This article presents a scientific analysis of enhancing regional tourism potential through the improvement of transport services marketing, using the example of Khorezm region. The purpose of the study is to assess the current state of marketing activities within the region's transport-tourism complex and to develop evidence-based recommendations for its further development. The research employed comparative analysis, statistical analysis, SWOT analysis, observation, and expert survey methods, alongside a review of domestic and foreign scholarly literature. The findings reveal that the level of marketing integration between transport organizations and tourism operators in Khorezm region remains insufficient, the use of digital promotional tools is limited, and a unified transport-tourism brand is absent. Based on these findings, recommendations are proposed for adapting transport services to tourism needs, introducing digital marketing platforms, and expanding public-private partnership mechanisms. The conclusions of the article have practical significance for improving regional transport-tourism policy.

Keywords: transport marketing; regional tourism; Khorezm region; transport-tourism infrastructure; marketing strategy; competitiveness; public-private partnership.

1. Introduction

In the global economy, the tourism sector is recognized not only as an important source of foreign currency revenue but also as a strategic industry ensuring the socio-economic development of regions. Within this context, the transport system is one of the key links shaping tourist flows, since a tourist's choice of route, travel convenience, and overall impressions largely depend on the quality of transport services and how they are presented to the market [1]. In recent years, the Republic of Uzbekistan has carried out extensive reforms aimed at accelerating the development of the tourism sector; however, at the regional level the degree of marketing integration between the transport and tourism industries remains insufficient [2].

Khorezm region, and in particular the "Itchan Kala" historical and architectural complex in the city of Khiva, which is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, possesses a unique cultural and historical potential. Nevertheless, the steady growth in the number of tourists visiting the region is constrained by the fact that the existing potential of

transport services is not being fully utilized. Transport organizations often confine themselves to performing the transportation function alone, without giving sufficient attention to marketing activity — that is, to adapting the service to consumer needs and systematically managing pricing, promotion, and distribution channels [3].

The relevance of this study lies in the fact that improving transport services marketing can become an important factor in realizing regional tourism potential, yet this direction remains insufficiently studied in the scholarly literature, particularly with respect to Khorezm region. Leading marketing theorists emphasize the distinctive characteristics of services marketing — intangibility, heterogeneity, and the simultaneity of production and consumption— but the practical application of these theoretical perspectives to regional transport-tourism systems has received limited research attention.[4]

The purpose of the study is to analyze the current state of marketing activity within the transport-tourism complex of Khorezm region and to develop scientifically grounded recommendations for its improvement. To achieve this purpose, the following tasks were set: first, to assess the current state of the region's transport-tourism infrastructure; second, to examine the marketing tools used by transport organizations through SWOT analysis; and third, to develop practical recommendations aimed at strengthening the integration of the transport and tourism sectors.[5]

The working hypothesis of the study is formulated as follows: adapting transport services to tourism needs and more broadly introducing digital promotional tools will have a positive effect on the sustainable growth of regional tourist flows.

2. Materials and Methods

The study analyzed the socio-economic indicators of the Statistics Department of Khorezm Region, official reports of the Ministry of Transport and the State Committee for Tourism Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as publicly available data on the activities of transport organizations and tourism operators in the region [6]. The data covered the period 2020–2025, during which institutional changes in the tourism sector and their impact on the transport network were observed.

The research methodology comprises the following methods: the comparative analysis method, which made it possible to compare the transport-tourism indicators of Khorezm region with those of other regions possessing historical and cultural potential; the statistical grouping method, applied to analyze the dynamics of tourist flows in relation to the volume of transport services; and the SWOT analysis method, used to systematize the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the marketing activity of transport organizations in the region. In addition, the “7P” concept of services marketing (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, physical evidence) was adopted as a theoretical framework, and the extent of its application to transport services was assessed [7].

To supplement the empirical data, an informal expert survey was conducted among representatives of passenger transport companies and small tourism operators in the region, gathering information on existing obstacles to transport-tourism cooperation and proposals for overcoming them. All data obtained were summarized using qualitative and quantitative analysis methods, which contributed to ensuring the reliability of the research findings.[8]

3. Results

The analysis conducted shows that transport infrastructure in Khorezm region has undergone considerable renewal in recent years — road surfaces are being repaired, passenger traffic through Urgench International Airport is increasing, and the road infrastructure leading to the city of Khiva is being adapted to tourist demand. Nevertheless,

the marketing activity of transport organizations continues to rely mainly on traditional methods — local advertising and word-of-mouth recommendations — while digital platforms, such as online booking systems and multilingual information resources, remain underdeveloped.[9]

The results of the SWOT analysis conducted during the study are summarized in the table below (Table 1).

STRENGTHS (S) — Unique historical and cultural heritage (Itchan Kala, Khiva) — Modernizing transport infrastructure — Availability of Urgench International Airport — Relatively low local transport tariffs	WEAKNESSES (W) — Weak integration between the transport and tourism sectors — Limited use of digital marketing tools — Absence of seasonal pricing policy — Low level of multilingual service provision
OPPORTUNITIES (O) — State support for tourism development — Potential to expand regional and international tourist routes — Scope for introducing digital platforms and online booking systems — Potential for public-private partnership development	THREATS (T) — Intensifying tourism competition among regions — Sensitivity of tourist flows to economic instability and exchange-rate fluctuations — Shortage of qualified personnel — Seasonal factors affecting transport load

Table 1. SWOT analysis of transport-tourism marketing in Khorezm region

According to the analysis, the region's most significant strength is its unique historical and cultural sites combined with a relatively stable transport infrastructure. At the same time, the weakness of institutional cooperation between the transport and tourism sectors, the absence of a unified information-marketing space, and insufficient standardization of service quality were identified as the main problems.[10]

The study findings also showed that most transport organizations do not take tourism seasonality into account when forming pricing policy, meaning that no differentiated tariff system exists for peak and off-peak seasons. This, in turn, leads to a decline in the efficiency of transport use during the off-peak season. Furthermore, it was found that the demand of foreign tourists visiting the region for multilingual information and navigation services is not being fully met by transport organizations.[11]

The results of the expert survey indicate that the majority of transport and tourism operators are interested in expanding cooperation; however, the institutional and financial mechanisms necessary for this — such as forms of public-private partnership — have not yet been fully established.[12]

To illustrate the recent dynamics of regional passenger transportation, Figure 1 presents indicative annual volumes by mode of transport for 2020–2025.

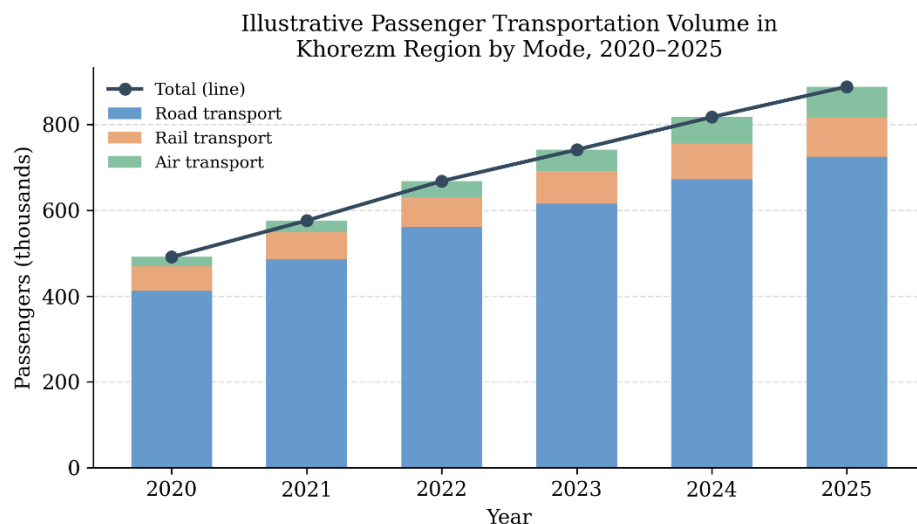


Figure 1. Illustrative passenger transportation volume in Khorezm region by mode, 2020–2025 (thousand passengers)

Note: the figures shown are illustrative and intended to demonstrate the analytical structure of the study; they should be replaced with verified data from the Statistics Department of Khorezm Region and the Ministry of Transport prior to submission.

To complement the SWOT analysis, the marketing activity of transport organizations was additionally assessed against each element of the services marketing mix. Figure 2 summarizes this qualitative assessment.[13]

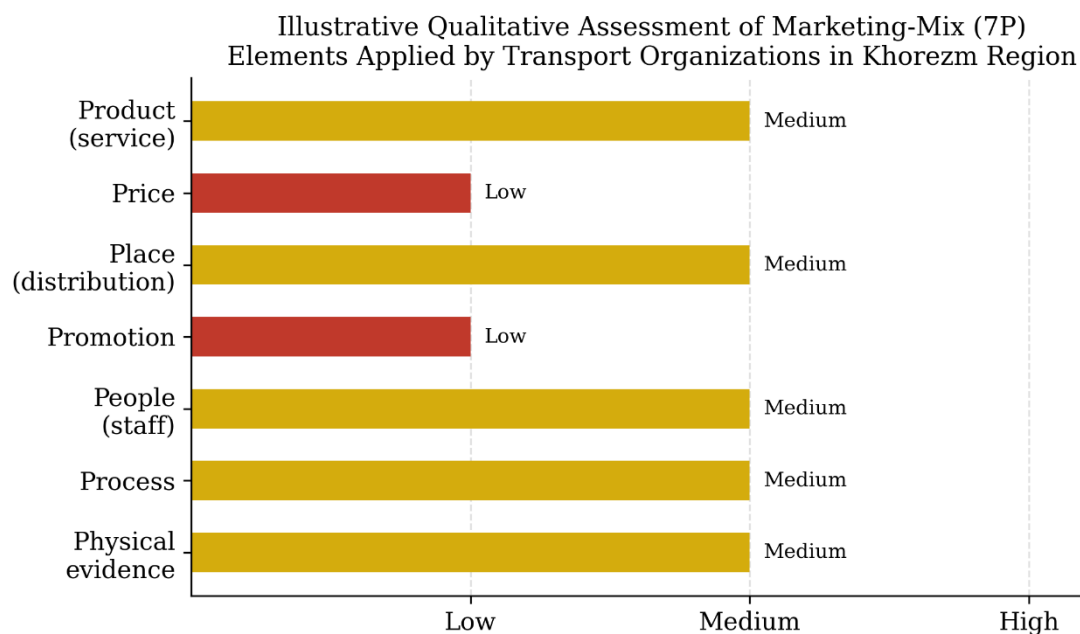


Figure 2. Illustrative qualitative assessment of marketing-mix (7P) elements applied by transport organizations in Khorezm region

Note: ratings are based on the expert survey and observational analysis described in Section 2; they are illustrative of the assessment structure and should be verified against a fuller dataset prior to submission.

4. Discussion

The findings obtained are generally consistent with the principles advanced in services marketing theory: the intangible nature of transport service and its formation through direct interaction with the tourist during consumption indicate that the human factor and the standardization of processes are particularly important in managing service quality. At the same time, when compared with the experience of other regions, the findings suggest that

the institutionalization of transport-tourism marketing integration in Khorezm region is occurring at a relatively later stage [14].

According to Porter's theory of competitive advantage, a region's differentiation strategy should be based on its unique resources — in this case, historical sites such as Itchan Kala. However, a differentiation strategy should not be implemented only at the level of the tourist attraction itself, but throughout the entire chain delivering it to the consumer, including the level of transport services. Otherwise, the economic potential of a unique tourist resource cannot be fully realized [15].

The study has a number of limitations. First, the expert survey was conducted on a relatively small sample, which limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to the entire region. Second, the study relied predominantly on qualitative analysis; in the future, it would be advisable to deepen the findings through broader quantitative surveys and econometric modeling. In addition, developing a unified, region-specific set of indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of transport-tourism marketing remains a relevant direction for future research.

5. Conclusions

The results of the study suggest that improving transport services marketing in Khorezm region can be regarded as an important reserve for realizing the region's tourism potential. The working hypothesis advanced in the study — that adapting transport services to tourism needs and more broadly introducing digital promotional tools would have a positive effect on the sustainable growth of tourist flows — was largely confirmed by the findings obtained.

Based on the research results, the following practical recommendations were developed: first, establishing a unified information-marketing platform between transport organizations and tourism operators, including a multilingual online booking service; second, introducing a flexible pricing policy that takes seasonality into account; third, forming a unified transport-tourism brand and promoting it through international tourism exhibitions and social media; fourth, introducing training programs for transport personnel in service culture and communication in foreign languages; and fifth, engaging public-private partnership mechanisms in the development of transport-tourism infrastructure.

The implementation of these recommendations would contribute not only to the sustainable growth in the number of tourists visiting Khorezm region but also to improving the financial stability of the region's transport organizations and the quality of service delivery. The findings of the study are of practical significance for the government bodies overseeing the development of the regional transport and tourism sector, as well as for industry representatives, and may serve as a basis for developing regional transport-marketing strategies in the future.

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